

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 18375 01 OF 02 021751Z

43

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

AID-05 IO-10 OMB-01 CU-02 SY-05 /080 W

----- 059780

R 021100Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0640

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 18375

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJ: NEW STRENGTH (NAWAPHON)

REF: A. BANGKOK 17603 B. BANGKOK 16355

C. BANGKOK 17022 (11/1/73)

SUMMARY: NEW STRENGTH (NAWAPHON) IS AN ORGANIZATION FORMED IN AUGUST 1974, WHICH FEEDS ON CONSERVATIVE ANTIPATHY TO THE LEFTIST ACTIVISM THAILAND HAS EXPERIENCED SINCE THE OCTOBER 1973 CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. THE MAIN VALUES IT PROPAGATES ARE LOYALTY TO NATION, RELIGION AND THE MONARCHY. THE LEADERS ARE MOSTLY RETIRED RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS FROM ALL THREE SERVICES PLUS SOME CIVILIANS. WATTHANA KHIEOWIMON IS THE DRIVING IDEOLOGUE. MANY OF THE LEADERS HAVE SOME CONNECTION WITH THE INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC), AND HENCE ELEMENTS OF THE ARMY-GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACIES PROBABLY GIVE NEW STRENGTH THEIR UNOFFICIAL BLESSING. ITS PRESENT INFLUENCE IS MINIMAL, AND IT IS NOT A POLITICAL PARTY; BUT IT DOES HAVE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 18375 01 OF 02 021751Z

A GROWTH POTENTIAL. THE EMERGENCE OF NAWAPHON WILL PROBABLY

ACCELERATE THE POLARIZATION OF THAI POLITICS AND COULD  
DRAG THE MONARCHY AND BUDDHIST HIERARCHY INTO THE POLITICAL

FRAY. END SUMMARY.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. SINCE THE OCTOBER 1973 CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, THAILAND HAS EXPERIENCED CONSIDERABLE AGITATION FOR, IF LITTLE REAL PROGRESS TOWARD, A MORE JUST SOCIETY WITH A WIDER DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS. SUCH TURBULANCE HAS LED TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISORDER, WHICH THE CONSERVATIVES VIEW AS BORDERING ON ANARCHY. LEFTIST AGITATION HAS STIMULATED A REACTION, AND THE THAI POLITICAL LIFE HAS EXPERIENCED DISTINCT POLARIZATION OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS. NEW STRENGTH (NAWAPHON) IS PART OF THAT REACTION.

#### NEW STRENGTH ATTITUDES

2. THE WORD NAWAPHON TRANSLATES BOTH AS "NINE FORCES" AND "NEW STRENGTH". IN A MORE ESOTERIC INTERPREATION, IT WOULD ALSO MEAN "PROTECTOR OF THE NINTH CHAKRI KING", THE PRESENT REIGNING MONARCH. THE GROUP ITSELF TRANSLITERATES THE WORD AS "NAWAPHOL" FOR ENGLISH USE AS AN UNGRAMMATICAL ACRONYM FOR "NATIONS AROUND THE WORLD AND PEACE OF LOVE". NEW STRENGTH REPRESENTS A CONSERVATIVE RESTATEMENT OF TRADITIONAL THAI VALUES UPHOLDING THE NATION, RELIGION, AND THE MONARCHY. RELIGION FOR NEW STRENGTH LEADERS MEANS BUDDHISM, AN EMPHASIS THAT COULD CREATE ANTAGONISMS WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE COUNTRY.

#### NEW STRENGTH ACTIVITIES

3. NEW STRENGTH ORGANIZES ITSELF ON A CELL BASIS. THIS HAS ALLOWED THE ORGANIZATION SOME MEASURE OF SECRECY AS IT HAS BUILT ITSELF UP. ON 21 AUGUST 1975 THE ORGANIZATION OPENED OFFICES IN THE THIP METAL BUILDING IN BANGKOK, ON WHAT THEIR PRESS RELEASE CALLED THE NEW STRENGTH'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 18375 01 OF 02 021751Z

4. DURING THE INTIAL RECRUITMENT STAGE NEW STRENGTH CONFINED ITSELF TO A LECTURE CAMPAIGN, AND PROSELYTIZED SMALL AUDIENCES. COMMENSURATE WITH ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STYLE, RECRUITS TOOK AN OATH OF ALLIEGANCE. THE CONSUL IN CHIANG MAI REPORTED THAT MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO SIGN "NAWAPHON" BEFORE THEIR NAMES AS A MEAS OF SPREADING THE GROUP'S INFLUENCE. NEW STRENGTH HAS MADE INROADS INTO THAI URBAN AND ACADEMIC LIFE. THE CONSUL IN CHIANG MAI

AND BANGKOK RESPONDENTS REPORT THAT FACULTY MEMBERS OF THAILAND'S UNIVERSITIES HAVE ACCEPTED NEW STRENGTH MEMBERSHIP.

5. NEW STRENGTH HAS EXTENDED ITSELF INTO THE PROVINCES. THE GOVERNOR OF LAMPHUN, BANLOM PHUCHONGKHAKUN, MOST RECENTLY CRITICIZED FOR HIS ROLE IN THE ARREST OF NINE STUDENT AND FARMER ACTIVISTS (REF B) DID NOT SPEAK, BUT SAT ON THE PLATFORM DURING THE OPENING OF THE NEW STRENGTH RALLY IN LAMPHUN THREE MONTHS AGO. ONE DISTRICT OFFICER FROM NAN PROVINCE INTIMATED TO A CHIANG MAI CONSULAR OFFICER THAT HIS SUPERIORS IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ENCOURAGED HIS PARTICIPATION IN NAWAPHON.

6. OUR CONSUL IN UDORN REPORTS THAT THE LOCAL NEW STRENGTH CHAPTER WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ORGANIZING A DEMONSTRATION WHICH SPOILED THE PLANS OF THE LOCAL STUDENT ACTIVISTS TO HOLD A JULY 4 ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATION.

#### NEW STRENGTH LEADERSHIP

7. A 15-MAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTEDLY RUNS NEW STRENGTH. IT INCLUDES SENIOR MILITARY PEOPLE FROM ALL THREE SERVICES; SOME OF THESE MILITARY LEADERS ARE RETIRED AND SOME HAVE SOME CONNECTIONS WITH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS OR THE INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC). NEW STRENGTH HAS NOT PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED WHO IS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, LEAVING THE FIELD OPEN FOR CONSIDERABLE CONJECTURE. NEVERTHELESS SOME OF THE IDENTIFIED LEADERS ARE:

CHAIRMAN: LIEUTENANT GENERAL WANLOP ROTCHANAWISUT, FORMER DIRECTOR, ARMED FORCES INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 18375 01 OF 02 021751Z

COMMAND (AFIOC), A JOB HE HAS HELD SINCE 1961;

EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR: LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHAMNIAN PHONGPHAIROT, PRESENT AFIOC DIRECTOR;

SOT KURAMAROHIT, WRITER; HE HAS QUIT NAWAPHON AFTER FIGHTING WITH WATTTHANA;

COLONEL SUTSAI HATSADIN, WITH ISOC; FURTHER IDENTIFIED AS THE LEADER OF THE "RED GAUR", A VOCATIONAL STUDENT GROUP USED TO INTIMIDATE STUDENT AND LABOR ACTIVISTS, AND

THANIN KRAIWICHIAN, A SUPREME COURT JUDGE.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 18375 02 OF 02 030334Z

64

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

AID-05 IO-10 OMB-01 CU-02 SY-05 /080 W

----- 067446

R 021100Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0641

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 18375

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

8. WATTHANA KHIEOWIMON, BORN 11 SEPTEMBER 1944, IS THE MAIN IDEOLOGUE BEHIND NEW STRENGTH. HE IS AN AGGRESSIVE, NAME-DROPPING, INFLUENCE PEDDLER (SEE REF C). WATTHANA RETURNED TO THAILAND FROM THE UNITED STATES IN 1973. LIEUTENANT GENERAL SAIYUT KOETPHON, ISOC DIRECTOR, GOT WATTHANA A JOB IN JULY, 1974, LECTURING AT THE ISOC NATIONAL SECURITY SEMINARS, WHERE THE STUDENTS ARE RANKING RTG BUREAU-UCRATS. AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES ANAN PHANYARACHUM AND OTHER OFFICIALS TOOK UMBRAGE AT WATTHANA'S POSITION BECAUSE THEY DID NOT FEEL THAT HE WAS QUALIFIED TO BE EXPOSED TO SUCH HIGH LEVEL MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. ON 1 NOVEMBER 1974, STILL UNDER GENERAL SAIYUT'S PATRONAGE, WATTHANA BECAME AN ADVISOR TO ISOC DESPITE CONTINUED COMPLAINTS FROM WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. HE REPORTEDLY HAS TERMINATED HIS ISOC EMPLOYMENT TO WORK FULL-TIME ON NEW STRENGTH. NOT ONLY DOES WATTHANA TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE NATURE OF THAI SOCIETY IN HIS STATEMENTS, BUT HE CLAIMS TO HAVE INTIMATE CONTACT WITH SENIOR

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 18375 02 OF 02 030334Z

LEVELS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. HE HAS STATED THAT HE IS AN ADVISOR TO SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER AND A CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY CONTACT.

9. MUCH OF WATTHANA'S ABILITY TO EXPAND NEW STRENGTH DEPENDS NOT ON ITS CONSERVATIVE APPEAL, BUT ITS CLAIM TO WELL PLACED CONNECTIONS. NEW STRENGTH HAS, FOR EXAMPLE, IMPLIED THAT IT HAS THE BACKING OF THE ROYAL FAMILY. THE ORGANIZATION HAS RECRUITED A BONZE, PHRA KITTHIWUTHO, WHO RUNS A SCHOOL FOR MONKS, TO PROSELYTIZE FOR IT.

HOW OTHERS VIEW NEW STRENGTH

10. ALTHOUGH THE CONSERVATIVE BLANDISMENTS OF NEW STRENGTH HAVE BROUGHT IT MEMBERS FROM THE BUREAUCRACIES AND THE MILITARY SERVICES, SOME CONSERVATIVES HAVE HUNG BACK. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GENERAL KRIT SIWARA HAS PLAYED AN EQUIVOCAL ROLE, NEITHER SUPPORTING NOR CRITICIZING NEW STRENGTH PUBLICLY. MILITARY LEADERS PROBABLY TACITLY APPROVE OF NEW STRENGTH, BUT ARE CONCERNED THAT IT MAY ERODE THEIR CONTROL OVER JUNIOR AND MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS. CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION WHICH WE HAVE HEARD IS CRITICAL OF NEITHER THE ORGANIZATION NOR ITS GOALS, BUT FOCUSES ITS DISTRUST ON WATTHANA PERSONALLY.

11. DR. KRASAE CHANAWONG, LEADER OF THE NEW FORCE PARTY, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER 27 JUNE 1975 THAT NEW STRENGTH PRESENTED A GRAVE DANGER TO THAILAND. SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND LEADER SOMKIT SISANGKHOM EXPRESSED THE SAME SENTIMENTS 14 JULY 1975. HE ADDED THAT NEW STRENGTH WAS COMMITTED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS PARTY.

12. VARIOUS ACTIVISTS AND LEFTIST GROUPS HAVE CRITICIZED NEW STENGTH. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROUP, AND THE CLANDESTINE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE OF THAILAND (VOPT) HAS MADE REFERENCE TO NAWAPHON IN ITS PROGRAMS.

COMMENTS:

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 18375 02 OF 02 030334Z

13. NEW STRENGTH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ISOC OR THAI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IS NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR. AT THIS

TIME NEW STRENGTH DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A HANDMAIDEN OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, SOME MILITARY OFFICERS PROBABLY HAVE A STRONG IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY FOR NEW STRENGTH'S GOALS. THE ARMY'S LEADERSHIP HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT NEW STRENGTH WOULD APPEAL TO DISSATISFIED MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS, THEREBY REDUCING THE CONTROL OF SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS.

14. THERE IS A TENUOUS, BUT GROWING CONNECTION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, AND NEW STRENGTH. THIS CONNECTION COULD LIMIT NEW STRENGTH'S POPULAR APPEAL BECAUSE THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS ANTICIPATHETIC TOWARD THESE OFFICIALS.

15. NEW STRENGTH LEADERSHIP APPEARS BOTH OPPORTUNIST AND LIGHTWEIGHT. SUCH LEADERSHIP MAY ACHIEVE SOME SUCCESS, HOWEVER, SINCE THERE ARE FEW ORGANIZATIONS FOR CONSERVATIVE-MINDED PEOPLE IN THAILAND; BUT THERE IS PROBABLY A LIMIT TO WHAT THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP CAN ACCOMPLISH. IF NEW STRENGTH SUCCEEDS, THE CONSERVATIVE ELITE MAY FIND THAT IT HAS ENCOURAGED A PHENOMENON THAT IT CANNOT TOTALLY CONTROL.

16. WATTHANA IS THE STRENGTH AND THE WEAKNESS OF NEW STRENGTH. SOME PEOPLE HOLD WATTHANA IN LOW REGARD AND WITHHOLD THEIR SUPPORT FROM NEW STRENGTH BECAUSE OF HIS CONTROL.

17 NEW STRENGTH AIMS TO BE THE PARAMOUNT CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATION IN THAILAND. ITS EMPHASIS ON THE CONSERVATIVE TRIUMVIRATE OF NATION, RELIGION AND MONARCHY, HOWEVER, HOLDS CONSIDERABLE DANGERS FOR THAILAND. THERE IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT NEW STRENGTH'S EMPHASIS ON KING, NATION AND RELIGION COULD DRAG THE MONARCHY AND THE BUDDHIST HIERARCHY INTO THE POLITICAL FRAY. IF THIS HAPPENS, THE ORGANIZATION WILL HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WEAKENING OF THE MONARCHY AS A FACTOR FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STABILITY, TO THE ULTIMATE COST OF THAILAND.

WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT REFORM, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, ORGANIZATION & MANAGEMENT  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 02 SEP 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** greeneet  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BANGKO18375  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750303-0367  
**From:** BANGKOK  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750990/aaaadbvtel  
**Line Count:** 313  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 6  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 BANGKOK 17603, 75 BANGKOK 16355  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 JUL 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <23 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NEW STRENGTH (NAWAPHON)  
**TAGS:** PINT, PGOV, TH, NAWAPHON, (WATTHANA KHEWIMOU)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006